China's soft power projection through the Chinese media: assessing the implications of Chinese media on Africans' perception of China's national image

Gideon Kimaiyo

Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract

Purpose – This article examines the effect of China's soft power projection through the Chinese media in Africa on the African audiences' perception of China's national image through a case study of the residents of Nairobi. It adopted Joseph Nye's soft power model and sought to address three fundamental questions: What is the extent and objective of China's media diplomacy in Africa? How has China's media "offensive" in Africa impacted African audiences' imagery of China? What are the implications, if any, of China's media diplomacy on the Kenyan public view of China?

Design/methodology/approach – This article used a mixed-methods research design, which deployed elements of positivism and interpretivism. It used a deductive approach and deployed the survey strategy, which entailed the collection of data from Nairobi city residents. The secondary data were collected from relevant academic literature sources. The primary data were analyzed empirically using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), while the secondary data were analyzed using discourse analysis.

Findings – China's soft power projection through the Chinese media in Africa is aimed at addressing the "misinformation" about China. China seeks its share of representation among the African public to correct negative perceptions of China. Kenyans had a generally positive attitude toward China. South Africa and Angola have "Fairly" positive perceptions of the Chinese media. However, this study did not reveal whether the perception was due to the influence of Chinese media. These findings implied that the African public's positive imagery of China cannot be fully attributed to Chinese media's influence.

Originality/value – This study is groundbreaking in that it is one of the few studies that have focused on China's public diplomacy in Africa and assessed the impact of Chinese media on the African public's perception of China.

Keywords Media diplomacy, National image, Public diplomacy, Soft power

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Chinese media presence in Africa can be traced to the post-Second World War (WWII) period, particularly after the Mao Tse Tung-led communist revolution in China. In 1959, Xinhua News Agency established a presence in Accra (Ghana) and Conakry (Guinea) [1] and Peking Review transmitted in English in East Africa [2]. Nonetheless, it is in the 21st century that

China has intensified and escalated its presence in Africa's media sphere [3]. Since the early 2000s, China's media offensive has intensified to an extent that Sergio Grassi considers Chinese media's international presence to be the greatest in Africa [4]. At least two issues are central to the People's Republic of China's (PRC) increased interest in the media ecosystem and media space of Africa. The first pertains to the domestic realities and transformations in China and the second relates to the global political dynamics and the international political economy in which China finds itself.

Domestically, China has undergone a remarkable transformation since Deng Xiaoping started to move the country from the ideologies and centrally planned economy attendant to Mao Tse Tung [5]. The Deng-inspired "opening" of the Chinese economy to foreign technology and investments transformed China into a market economy with the world's fastest-growing economy within a decade. Today China's economy is second only to that of the United States of America (USA) [6]. The exponential growth of the Chinese economy created the need for the PRC to seek international markets for Chinese products and to secure raw materials needed to sustain economic growth. The developing world became a place of great strategic interest for China and therein lies Beijing's need for an African focus.

Internationally, China's international outlook and engagement with the world and Africa particularly has been a part of China's reaction to the dynamics of global politics. China's advent as an economic dynamo and increasing military power not come without criticism. China's rise has been framed, especially by the Western media, in negative and neocolonialist terms [7]. With this, the Western media-inspired narrative, China is a leading play in the "new scramble" for vast resources in Africa [8].

Arguably, the term neocolonialism has regained currency in relation to China's increased presence in Africa [9]. In this sense, the increased presence of Chinese international media in Africa is in tandem with China's projection of soft power through public diplomacy. China's media diplomacy is aimed not only at addressing what China sees as the "negative" depiction of China by the Western media but also at communicating China to Africa and in so doing, shaping the African public's perception of China's national image [10].

In line with this, this article examines the effect of China's projection of its intangible power resources via the Chinese media in Africa on the African audiences' perception of China's national image through a case study of the residents of Nairobi. It adopted Joseph Nye's soft power model and sought to address three fundamental questions: What is the extent and objective of China's media diplomacy in Africa? How has China's media "offensive" in Africa impacted African audiences' imagery of China? What are the implications, if any, of China's media diplomacy on the Kenyan public view of China? The main thesis of this article is that China's diplomacy through its media in Africa has had little impact on how Africans perceive China's national image.

Literature review
Soft power model and public diplomacy
The locus of China's media diplomacy is rooted in the soft power paradigm. Power in international relations literature denotes the ability of a state to influence the referent objects (other states and/or foreign audiences) to realize its preferred outcomes. States exercise this power through coercion, inducement (payment), persuasion or attraction [11]. Thus, power is understood in terms of a state's capability. According to Joseph Nye, there are three forms of power that states possess; one is "hard" power, another is "soft" power and in between there is "smart" power [12].

Hard power is the traditional form of power that is exercised through the utilization of economic, military and political resources to intimidate and compel others to align with the state's preferred outcomes. Soft power is exercised through persuasion and attraction and

involves the use of special policies, language, cultural aspects and the media to achieve objectives through non-coercive means [13]. "Smart" power involves the intelligent integration and application of soft power and hard power attributes [14]. The success of foreign policy requires deliberative and strategic integration of the aspects of all three forms of power, but Joseph Nye opines that soft power is especially crucial [15]. The notion of soft power was first implied by Steven Luke [16] in his work, Power: A Radical View and Jeffrey C. Isaac [17] in his work Beyond the Three Faces of Power; A Critique. These two scholars had conceived a new form of power that, unlike the conventional hard power, was to be found in a state's intangible assets. These intangible assets include culture, values, geography, cultural diversity, arts, political system, science and technology, civil society and policies.

Joseph Nye, an American political scientist, advanced this line of argument and facilitated the development of the soft power model. He is considered the originator of the soft power perspective in international relations. According to Nye [18], states could more effectively use their intangible capabilities including political values, foreign policy and culture to realize their foreign policy goals than they would use hard power. Soft power is "co-optive power"; that is, it is the power which states could use to shape others" preferences through attraction and appeal [19]. Co-optive power also rests on a state's "ability to attract" [20] and to set or shape the political discourse and agenda in a fashion that sways the preferences of others [21]. In this sense, the state's power can be found in its respective intangible assets and Nye [22] posited that this was a more important source of power than hard power [23].

Soft power's aim is subtle, make others desire what you want. For this reason, it resonates with the notion of "conditioned power". The premise of soft power is persuasive communication and this forms the point of convergence between public diplomacy and soft power. Public diplomacy is essentially an instrument of soft power and is conceived as the act of promoting a country's national interest and national security, enlightening and influencing the foreign publics' perception and extending dialogue with foreign audiences [24]. This dialogue is based on the intangible foundation of soft power identified by Nye. Patricia A. Karl argues that the media has become an integral actor in inter-governmental communication and increasing, the communication between governments and foreign publics [25]. It is a key instrument for public diplomacy and as such a potentially potent tool for soft power projection for states.

Kenneth Boulding [26] and Walter Lipman [27], pivotal thinkers in media studies posit that the mass media is crucial for national image construction and for advancing the objective of foreign policy. Therefore, the link between the media and international politics can be understood in two aspects [28]. First, according to the rational learning model, the media provides information to rational constituents [29]. Second, the media functions as a tool for political propaganda [30]. It is within these two broad perspectives that the media finds its relevance not only for politics but also more specifically for public diplomacy. The agenda-setting and the gatekeeping perspectives on media construe media as having sway in international politics [31].

Public diplomacy and media diplomacy nexus

Public diplomacy is rooted in "Track 2" diplomacy. Joseph Montville coined the term "Track 2" diplomacy to refer to the unofficial or informal exchanges between the members of antagonistic countries to establish relations, shape foreign publics' opinion and manage human and material resources to resolve a conflict [32]. According to Edmund Gullion, the originator of the term, public diplomacy implies a nation's concerted effort to sway the attitudes and opinions of overseas elite and foreign publics to facilitate the realization of foreign policy goals [33]. Public diplomacy is the emergent or new form of diplomacy, which unlike traditional diplomacy that had involved and still involves formal agents; consist of informal and direct engagement with foreign publics [34].

More specifically, it is an apparatus that governments deploy to mobilize soft power assets to disseminate information and to attract foreign publics instead of just foreign governments [35]. Public diplomacy aims at attracting the foreign public, appealing to them and transforming their perceptions and attitudes favorably [36]. This form of diplomacy is conducted in various forms including monologue, dialogue and conversation. Etyan Gilboa posits that public diplomacy involves divulging diplomacy to the opinion of the masses and the media [37]. Nonetheless, all public diplomacy activities are aimed at enhancing a country's reputation and image by shaping foreign public perception of the nation's core values, culture and domestic policies [38]. For this reason, public diplomacy is a must for states seeking to transform foreign public opinion through cultural promotion and national image cultivation.

According to Michael Kunczik, national image is the cognitive representation held by an individual or a group about a certain nation and which the individual or group deem truthfully about the nation and its citizens [39]. It is the nature of constructed collective opinions, judgments and perceptions of a country by a foreign public. States seek to establish a positive image of themselves, for as Robert Jervis posits, a good image supersedes military and economic powers [40]. Therefore, through public diplomacy, a state aims to maintain and maximize its power in the international system. States use several tools to conduct public diplomacy perhaps among the most potent of these are; the media, cultural centers, foreign exchange (cultural and educational), exhibitions, sponsored visits, training and use of digital platforms. Media forms a potent tool for national image cultivation and manipulation.

China's media diplomacy in Africa

Cristina Archetti has argued that media diplomacy is the deployment of the mass media by state officials and representatives to influence the opinions and attitudes of foreign publics about the state [41]. Media diplomacy is an integral component of public diplomacy as it underscores the new prospects that the media provides to public diplomacy about the capacity to reach and shape foreign public opinions. It is within the concept and practice of media diplomacy that China's attempts at soft power projection in Africa can be examined. The Chinese media offensive in Africa can be sketched back to the immediate post-Mao Tse Tung-led communist revolution in China [42].

The founding of the PRC in 1949 coincided with the growing tensions between the USA-led capitalist West and the Russian-led communist East. During this time and throughout the Cold War epoch, the goal of China's media diplomacy with Africa was three-fold: explain China's brand of Communism, seek ideological support for the "One China" policy and explain China's One Child Policy and repair China's international image, especially after the Tiananmen Square Incident [43]. At this time, Chinese officials paid little attention to the Western media's imagery of China. Furthermore, China's interest in Africa and its capacity to escalate its relations with Africa was limited by the stagnant status of its economy. Nevertheless, Deng Xiaoping's reforms, especially the Open Door Policy and the Cold War's end in 1989 presented unprecedented transformations that affected how China would engage the international community [44]. It was during this time that Beijing found it crucial to explain to global audiences including those in Africa, China's rise and Beijing's intentions in light of its increasing economic power.

China's economic transformation post-opening up, its raw materials need and need for foreign markets, the issue of human rights and international media's depiction of China compelled China to talk back to the world and not just to listen to it [45]. Explicating China, from China's perspective and experience was deemed crucial for addressing the "misinformation" deemed explicit in Western media's coverage of China. It was within the context that China laid a framework for increased Sino–Africa relations that would prove pivotal in the Chinese media offensive in Africa.

The framework that China unfolded was the China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) [46]. The first FOCAC was launched in 2000, envisaged the enlargement of China–Africa cooperation in various fields including the media. The FOCAC recognized the role of the media in enhancing China–Africa ties and established grounds for the creation of the Chinese media infrastructure in Africa [47]. Therefore, beginning in 2000, a structured presence of Chinese influence on the African media space commenced. For instance, in 2000, the Uganda television station obtained a satellite from the Chinese state-owned Xinhua and in 2004, Gabon accepted Chinese assistance in establishing its national broadcaster [48].

The 2006 Beijing FOCAC meeting, attended by 41 African heads of states, called upon the news media to contribute positively to the enhancement of friendship and mutual cooperation between China and Africa [49]. The need for media cooperation has been reiterated by the subsequent FOCAC meetings. In the 2015 FOCAC Action Plan, the Chinese President Xi Jingpin announced the establishment of 10,000 Villages Project that would enhance access to television for millions of Africans living in remote villages [50].

The 2006 FOCAC meeting, dubbed the "*Year of Africa*" was followed by the establishment of China Radio International (CRI) in Nairobi and the transfer of the Paris, France-based Xinhua International to the Kenyan capital [51]. In 2011, Global Television Network (CGTN) Africa (formerly CCTV Africa) initiated operations in Nairobi. China Daily, the Johannesburg-based ChinaAfrica, which is a monthly bilingual magazine, focuses on Sino–Africa relations. CGTN broadcasts in French, Arabic, Spanish, Kiswahili and Russian; CCTV broadcasts some programs in Chinese, and these media outlets distribute through cable, satellite and Internet Protocol television (IPTV).

In the Anglophone countries in Africa, the programs are broadcast in English and the respective national language, in Francophone countries the programing is in French and the respective national language, North Africa, the program is mostly in Arabic. CRI broadcasts in 43 foreign language and has 32 AM radio and 117 international FM stations and partners around the world including Africa. By the end of 2014, the Chinese media house, Xinhua News Agency had more than 30 African bureaus and employed over 400 Africans including 60 journalists [52].

Among the state-owned Chinese media operating in Africa include: CRI, China Daily Africa Weekly, CGTN, Xinhua News Agency and Beijing Review. The most dominant private Chinese media firm with close links to Beijing is the StarTimes. These Chinese state-owned media are platforms for the communication of the soft power China and the construction of a more Sino-centric media discourse in Africa. Statistics in Sino–Africa relations since 2000 demonstrate China's media offensive in Africa since 2000. Implicit in since 2006 is China's near-ubiquitous presence in virtually all facets of Africa's media sphere. An overview of Chinese media presence in Africa suggests that China has labored to win the hearts and minds of African publics through media offensive. Nonetheless, the fundamental question is, has China's media offensive resulted in a positive imagery of China's national image by African audiences?

In 2006, China centered its focus on Africa's media sphere through media presence and training. During that year, Xinhua relocated its Regional Editorial Office, which focused on broadcasting in French–Francophone countries in Africa from Paris to Nairobi [53]. Kenya also received technical support when CCTV issued broadcast equipment estimated at US$150,000 [54]. Again in 2006, Beijing enhanced official exchange and training for Africa when it held the Sino–Africa Cooperation Forum (SACF) that accentuated media cooperation. Following the SAFC, China's Xinhua commenced training for African journalist in Beijing [55].

In 2007, China offered training to 30 African journalists from Francophone Africa at the Chinese Media University. It also provided technical support to Liberia offering US$4 m to the Liberian Broadcasting System (LBS) toward the expansion of the country's FM radio [56]. In 2008, Xinhua engaged in content creation in Africa when it initiated coverage of African and

Chinese new of mutual interest. In that year, Beijing organized the Sharm ei Sheikh summit in Egypt, which centered on media cooperation. In the following year, in 2009, the Chinese media extended their presence in content creation and media presence in Africa when Xinhua and CCTV engaged in Mozambique and established African Bureau in Nairobi. The year 2009 also witnessed more official exchange when China Council on Information Office seminar was held and attended by 94 journalists from Africa [57].

In 2010 and 2011, China's presence in Africa's media space became even more concerted. In 2010, CNC/Xinhua and Myriad International Holdings (MIH) entered a joint venture in content creation that sought to create content targeted at about four million Africans [58]. In the same year, Beijing organized a China–Africa media conference at Nairobi Kenya aimed at fostering media cooperation. In 2011, China signed a memorandum of understanding with Zambia aimed at media capacity building and protection of the press. That year also saw that the Kenyan government awarded the Chinese media company StarTimes of a contract to disseminate media content. Xinhua launched a mobile Newspaper in Nairobi and partnered with MIH on content creation in South Africa [59]. In 2012, CCTV Africa established a regional center in Nairobi further increasing the Chinese media presence in Africa.

GlobeScan/PIPA study sampled some 28,619 African's from 27 African countries and examined their perception of China. It found that the sampled Africans had a general positive attitude toward China with the highest percentages being recorded in Nigeria and Kenya, at 82% and 77%, respectively [60]. This study did not, however, assess whether this perception was due to exposure to the Chinese media programs or whether it was due to some intervening factors.

Gornfinkel *et al.* [61] studied how China is perceived by the public in China in South Africa and Angola. They determined that there was a "fairly" positive perception of the Chinese firm and media. Similar, to the GlobeScan/PIPA study, the study did not indicate whether that perception was due to the influence of Chinese media in the two countries. A more focused attempt was made by Fei Jiang *et al.* [62], when they assessed the Chinese media role in image-building in Africa. According to them, China's journalistic initiatives had fostered a particularly positive perception of China.

Wasserman and Madrid-Morales [63] studied Kenyan and South African students to assess their level of interactions with the Chinese media and how they perceived China. According to them, students in South Africa and Kenya have little interest in the Chinese media and a significant number neither had access to it nor were willing to source their information about China from the Chinese media [64]. If these results are taken as representative, it can be deduced that the impact of China's media diplomacy on how China is perceived is limited at best.

Research methodology

This article used mixed-methods research design, which deployed elements of interpretivism and positivism. The mixed-methods approach permitted the integration of aspects of qualitative and quantitative research that ensured effective exploration of the research problem and addressing of the research questions. Interpretivism involves the qualitative assessment of language, context and shared learning to attain knowledge of a socially constructed reality. Unlike positivism which focuses on "facts," interpretivism focuses on meaning. To address the first and the second research question, the researcher deployed a qualitative methodology that involved historical study that include the collection of secondary data from published and unpublished academic sources of literature on the research topic.

Positivism is associated with realism and involves the application of ideals of objectivity and measurements. By using positivism, the researcher sought to attain representativeness through the application of statistics. In this study, positivism underscored the survey

research strategy that involved the application of statistical and empirical principles to sample Nairobi citizens and to gather their opinion on the Chinese media through primary research. The data were collected using semi-structured questionnaires that were self-administered to sampled residents.

Participants in this survey were purposively selected to represent the diversity including government ministries, media, private informal businesses, private formal businesses, universities and colleges, religious institutions, civil society, county government and public and political parties.

Approval for primary data collections was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). In total, out of Nairobi's 4.4 m residents, 400 were sampled using the formula by Taro Yamane and the sample distribution is as shown in Table 1;

$$n = N/\{1 + N(e)2\}$$

Where: n, stands for the sample size

N stands for the population

e represents the margin error

This study used a deductive approach underpinned by the soft power model. The primary data were analyzed empirically using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The secondary data were analyzed using the discourse analysis.

Results and discussions

This study sought to answer three questions: What is the extent and objective of China's media diplomacy in Africa? How has China's media "offensive" in Africa impacted African audiences' imagery of China? What are the implications, if any, of China's media diplomacy on the Kenyan public view of China?

This part presents the findings of this study. According to the rational learning model, media's two main roles in international politics are to provide information to foreign rational constituents and to act as a tool for political propaganda. By using media, public diplomacy seeks to attract, appeal to and transform the perceptions and attitudes of foreign audiences favorably. It is found that the previous analyses of Chinese media diplomacy in Africa have centered on system-level and content-related analyses with their implications for African's perception of China being speculated or assumed.

	Serial	Category/classification	Target
1	Government ministries	40	
2	Media	40	
3	Private sector informal business	40	
4	Private sector formal business	40	
5	Universities and colleges	40	
6	Religious groups	40	
7	Civil society	40	
8	County government	40	
9	Public	40	
10	Political parties	40	
Total			400
Source(s): Table by the authors			

Table 1.
Study population

Concerning the extent and objective of China's media diplomacy in Africa and based on the reviewed literature, this study finds that China has established a strong media presence in Africa since the immediate post-independence period in Africa. The Chinese media has been an integral component of China's public diplomacy in Africa. Media became a crucial tool for China's engagement in Africa particularly in the immediate post-Mao Tse Tung-led communist revolution in China [65].

In this period, China's media diplomacy in Africa focused on three issues which Beijing found critical to its national interests. The initial objectives of China's media diplomacy in Africa included; one, explaining China's brand of communism, explaining and establishing ideological support for the "One China" policy and repairing China's international image following the Tiananmen Square Incident [66]. It is within these ammeters that the intensification of China's media offensive in the continent was pivoted.

This study found that after the Cold War and as China's economy started to rise, there was change and continuity in the objectives of China's media diplomacy in Africa. While the "One China" policy remained a key issue in the Chinese media content, China intensified its communication of its political system and its domestic policies including its human rights record. Selling China to foreign audiences as a development and trade partner for Africa also became a major issue. Beijing found it important to explain to global audiences China's rise and Beijing's intentions in light of its increasing economic power.

With persistent concerns over China's human rights record coupled with what Beijing pictured as negative portrayal of China by the Western media in Africa, the Chinese media offensive on the African continent was intensified. This study finds that the FOCAC 1 provided a platform for the Chinese media to drive China agenda for enlightening African audiences about China's political system, cultural material and development intentions for Africa and extending dialogue with African audiences.

Therefore, by 2015, China had a strong presence in Africa's media space with CRI and CGTN transmitting in almost all African countries. It is found that CRI was broadcasting in 43 foreign languages and had 32 AM radio and 117 international FMs. By the end of 2014, the Chinese media house, Xinhua News Agency had more than 30 African bureaus and employed over 400 Africans including 60 journalists [67]. Several state-owned the Chinese media operating in Africa include CRI, China Daily Africa Weekly, CGTN, Xinhua News Agency and Beijing Review. These findings suggest that the Chinese media have been aggressively advancing the agenda of China's public diplomacy in Africa.

This study also sought to establish how China's media "offensive" in Africa impacted African audiences' imagery of China. This study examined previous studies with a view of understanding Africans' perception of Chinese media and their view on whether the Chinese media had impacted their view of China, its political system and cultural materials. It found that the Chinese media have had some positive impact on Africans' attitudes toward China. For instance, in Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria, the public view of China is favorable due to the influence of Chinese media [68].

What is interesting is that the influence of Chinese media on the African positive view of China varies among countries. For instance, this study found that Kenyans and Nigerians have the highest positive view of China compared to other countries such as Cameroon. It is worth noting that Nigeria and Kenya, in particular, have a high presence and penetration of Chinese media and the fact that China is also mostly viewed positively in these countries attests to the influence of Chinese media. Nonetheless, in Kenya and South Africa, students have less interest in the Chinese media and a significant number neither had access to it or were willing to source their information about China from the Chinese media [69].

The respondents were asked whether they listened to or watched the Chinese media. As shown in Figure 1, 53.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they listened to or watched the Chinese media and 19.6% disagreed. Around 20.2% of the respondents said that

they listened or watched the Chinese media sometimes and 4.5% agreed and 2.1% strongly
agreed. This shows that very few Nairobi residents listened to or watched the Chinese media
for information on China. This finding is also indicative of the trends in listenership and
viewership of the Chinese media in Kenya and probably Africa, given that Nairobi represents
the hub of media operations in Kenya, if not in sub-Saharan Africa.

The researcher asked the participants who indicated that they listened or watched the
Chinese media whether they considered either CRI or CCTV as their most important source of
international news on China. The results showed that 34.9 and 22.9% strongly disagreed and
disagreed, respectively, that either CRI or CCTV was their source of international news.
Around 20.5% answered that they sometimes rely on CRI or CCTV for news on China, while
11.4 and 4.8% agreed and strongly agreed that they source their international news on China
from either CRI or CCTV, respectively. The results are shown in Table 2.

The research participants were asked if they considered the Chinese media to spread true
information about China's political system. The responses by the Nairobi residents are again
an indicator of Kenyan's perception of the authenticity of Chinese media and by extension,
African's view of the Chinese media in the continent. As indicated in Figure 2, 30.7 of the
sampled Nairobi residents were unsure and 28% and 21.4% strongly disagreed and
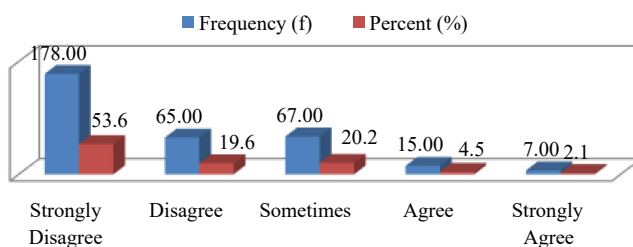
Figure 1.
Consumption of the
Chinese media by
Nairobi residents

	Frequency (f)	Per cent (%)
Strongly disagree	116	34.9
Disagree	76	22.9
Sometimes	86	25.9
Agree	38	11.4
Strongly agree	16	4.8
Total	332	100
Source(s): Table by the authors		

Table 2.
Nairobi residents'
reliance on either CRI
or CCTV for News
on China
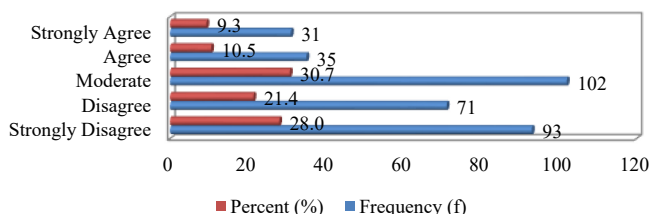
Figure 2.
Nairobi residents'
perception of the
Chinese media's
authenticity

disagreed, respectively. Around 10.5% and 9.3% agreed and strongly agreed, respectively, that the Chinese media spread authentic news about China's political system. This finding was in contrast to the findings of an earlier study by Zhang and Mwangi [70], which found that the Kenyans were trusting of the Chinese media as they believed that they helped Kenyans understand China and its political system. Nonetheless, even Zhang and Mwangi [71] concluded that the Chinese media had not succeeded in projecting China's political values positively among the Kenyan listeners and viewers.

The researcher asked the respondents whether they considered the Chinese media as tools for China propaganda in Kenya. Around 26.8% of the respondents strongly agreed, 15.7% agreed, 25% were "moderate", 20.8% strongly disagreed and 16.03% disagreed, respectively. This means that the largest portion of the respondents, 42.5% agreed that the Chinese media were used by China to spread propaganda compared to 37.1% who thought that the Chinese media spread accurate information and was not used by the Chinese authorities. The results are shown in Table 3. The findings confirmed by Guyo and Yu [72] show that the findings close to half of the Kenyans (48.2%) are considered content in the Chinese media as propaganda.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they considered the Chinese media in Kenya to have enhanced their appreciation of Chinese cultural material including Chinese music, art, cuisine and language. As shown in Figure 3, 28% were "moderate", 24% strongly agreed, 16% agreed, 18% disagreed and 14% strongly disagreed that the Chinese media in Kenya had enhanced their appreciation of Chinese cultural material.

These results indicate that 40% of Nairobi residents have come to appreciate China's cultural material due to China's media compared to a significant number of 32% who the Chinese media has not convinced to perceive China's media positively.

	Frequency (f)	Per cent (%)
Strongly disagree	69	20.8
Disagree	54	16.3
Moderate	68	20.5
Agree	52	15.7
Strongly agree	89	26.8
Total	332	100
Source(s): Table by the authors		

Table 3.
Perception of the Chinese media as a propaganda tool for Chinese authorities

Figure 3.
Appreciation of China's cultural material due to Chinese media
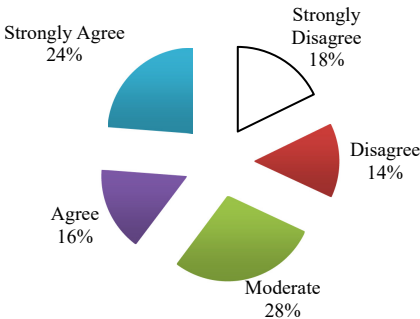
Source(s): Figure by author

Conclusion

This article scrutinized the implications of China's soft power projection through Chinese media on African's perception of China through a survey of the residents of Nairobi. It centered on the soft power model advanced by Joseph Nye. From the analysis presented, it is understandable that China has escalated its media diplomacy in Africa with the intention of explaining China to African audiences and by so doing creating a favorable view of China among African audiences. China's media diplomacy is in response to China's own domestic transformations, particularly its economic growth, which has inspired it to look for raw materials and markets in Africa.

It has also been a response to the "misinformation" by the Western media, which have persistently portrayed China's image negatively. Against the backdrop of the analysis given by previous research, it is evident that China's soft power projection through the media has had little impact on how Africans perceive China. The Chinese media penetration and influence are still insignificant. African audiences still hold a pessimistic view of China and most consider China's involvement in Africa as mostly beneficial to China.

Notes

1. Madrid-Morales (2016)
2. Banda (2009)
3. Wu (2016)
4. Grassi (2014)
5. U.S Library of Congress (2019)
6. Lin (2007)
7. Charles (2014)
8. Ibid. 1–14
9. Ogunrotifa Ayodeji Bayo (2011)
10. Leslie (2016)
11. Ibid., 4
12. Nye (2004)
13. Wang and Lu (2008)
14. Nye (2004)
15. Ibid.
16. Lukes (1974)
17. Isaac (1987)
18. Nye (2004)
19. Nye (1990)
20. Nye (2008)
21. Nye (1990)
22. Nye (2004)
23. Ibid. 1
24. Trajkov and Trajkov (2015)
25. Patricia (1982)

26. Kenneth Boulding (1991).

27. Walter (1922)

28. Leslie (2016)

29. Stromberg (n.d)

30. Sarah Cook (2021)

31. Brian Hocking (2005).

32. Montville (2006)

33. See Szondi *et al.* (2008)

34. Nye (1990)

35. Nye (2008)

36. Coopeland (2009)

37. Gilboa (2001)

38. Cowan and Arsenault (2008)

39. Kunczik (1997)

40. Jervis (1970)

41. Archetti (2012)

42. Leslie (2016)

43. Zhang (2010)

44. Steven (1994)

45. Gary (2016)

46. Wasserman (n.d)

47. Ibid. 47

48. Wu (2012)

49. Madrid-Morales *et al.* (2017)

50. Ibid. 12

51. Madrid-Morales *et al.* (2017)

52. Jiang *et al.* (2016)

53. Xin (2009).

54. Wu, *Op. cit.* 13–14

55. Khadiagala (2008)

56. Wu, *Op. cit.* 13–14

57. Ibid.

58. Madrid-Morales *et al.* (2017)

59. Wu, *Op. cit.* 13–14

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Further reading